

Fuels and Fire Behavior Advisory

Southern California

July 16, 2014



Subject: Very low live and dead fuel moistures, along with persistent drought have created the potential for active to extreme fire behavior in central California.

Discussion: All of California is experiencing drought conditions. According to the latest [Drought Monitor](#), almost 80% of the state is in a D3 (Extreme) drought, and 36% of the state is in a D4 (Exceptional) drought. Due to the persistent drought, Bark Beetle Outbreak is on the increase, and this coupled with sudden Oak death is contributing to an increase in both standing and down dead fuels. Effects of much lower than normal live and dead fuel moistures and observed fire behavior for 2014 are the focus of this advisory.

Difference From Normal Conditions: Live fuel moisture values among Chamise are currently ranging from 65-75% across much of the central portions of the state. These numbers reflect fuel conditions more typical of September than that of mid-July. Dead fuels in these same areas are either at, or are near record low levels.

Concerns to Firefighters:

- Due to the lack of precipitation this past winter and spring, snowpack in the higher elevations (particularly in the Sierra) has been well below normal. Therefore, there will be a greater likelihood for increased fire activity at higher elevations this summer. This could mean that fires will be longer in duration with a greater possibility for torching and crowning types of fire behavior.
- Due to the abnormally dry fuel conditions, all fires are expected to burn more actively, consume more fuels, and exhibit more extreme fire behavior than in recent years.
- Active fire behavior can extend well into the night and early morning hours even with moderate RH recovery. Already this year, Southern California has experienced ten Class F fires and seven team deployments. It is important to be mindful of and manage fatigue for all resources. **Everyone, every day, returns home safely.**

Mitigation Measures:

- Local and inbound fire personnel need to be aware that fire behavior is exceeding normal expectations for this time of the year. **Local briefings need to be thorough and highlight specific fire environment conditions. These include but are not limited to local weather forecasts, Pocket Cards, ERC's, live and dead fuel moistures, and special fuel conditions such as mortality, Sudden Oak Death and frost killed brush, etc.**
- Suppression actions need to be based on good anchor points, escape routes, and safety zones. **Remember LCES. Experienced lookouts are essential under these conditions.**
- **Base all actions on current and expected behavior of the fire.** Augment initial attack resources as incident activity dictates.
- Review the most current Southern California 7-day Significant Fire Potential along with Daily, Monthly and Seasonal Outlooks at: <http://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/outlooks/outlooks.htm>

Area of Concern: This advisory is valid for the following PSAs...**Central Sierra, Southern Sierra, Sierra Foothills, and the Central Coast Interior (SC02, SC03, SC04, and SC06).** A map showing the areas of concern described in this advisory can be found at: [National Fuel Advisories](#)

Issued: July 16, 2014 (Note this advisory will be in effect for 14 days and will be reviewed/updated at that time.)